NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1699 OCTOBER 25, 1976
CHARLES NEDD

ELECTION '76: ONE WEEK TO GO

ANNCR: WITH ELECTION DAY JUST ONE WEEK AWAY, THREE NEW POLLS SHOW DEMOCRAT JIMMY CARTER STILL IN THE LEAD WHILE A MAJORITY OF THE NATION'S NEWSPAPERS, IN RECENT EDITORIALS, SAY THEY'RE FOR PRESIDENT FORD. CHARLES NEDD HAS THIS COMMENT.

VOICE: PRESIDENT GERALD FORD AND JIMMY CARTER ARE ON THE ROAD IN A FINAL, INTENSIVE SEARCH FOR VOTES -- BOTH CANDIDATES AWARE THAT THE ELECTION IS CLOSE ENOUGH TO TURN ON A SINGLE ELEVENTH-HOUR BREAKTHROUGH. AS THEY BEGAN THEIR CLIMATIC CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEYS, THREE WEEKLY MAGAZINES PUBLISHED POLLS SHOWING MISTER CARTER STILL THE FAVORITE. IN A NATION-WIDE SURVEY OF VOTER SENTIMENT, TIME MAGAZINE PUT THE CARTER MARGIN AT FOUR PER CENT, TWO POINTS LESS THAN THE LATEST GALLUP POLL. THE OTHER TWO MAGAZINES TOOK STATE-BY-STATE SURVEYS, NEWSWEEK CONCLUDING THAT THE DEMOCRAT HAS AT THIS STAGE ENOUGH ELECTORAL VOTES TO WIN, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT FINDING HIM AHEAD BUT STILL SHORT OF AN ELECTORAL MAJORITY. ALL THREE SURVEYS SUGGESTED THE FINAL OUTCOME WILL HINGE ON THOSE VOTERS WHO ARE STILL UNDECIDED.

MEANWHILE, AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEGUN MAKING THEIR EDITORIAL ENDORSEMENTS, AND THOSE THAT HAVE DONE SO ARE SIDING WITH PRESIDENT FORD BY A THREE-TO-ONE MARGIN. MANY OF THE ENDORSEMENTS FOLLOWED TRADITIONAL PARTY ALIGNMENTS, FOR MOST PUBLISHERS TEND TO BE REPUBLICAN. SURPRISING, HOWEVER, WAS THE LARGE NUMBER OF SOUTHERN PAPERS BACKING THE PRESIDENT, INCLUDING SEVEN OF THEM IN MISTER CARTER'S HOME STATE OF GEORGIA.

WHILE THE PUBLISHERS WERE EXPRESSING THEIR SYMPATHIES, MANY JOURNALISTS CONTINUED TO EXPRESS THEIRS, AND FOR THE MOST PART THEY REMAIN CRITICAL OF THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR ALLEGED CAMPAIGN FAILURES. NONE OF THIS IS VERY NEW TO AMERICAN POLITICS, AND FOR

THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR THE PRESS ITSELF IS COMING IN FOR SOME CRITICISM. WRITING IN THE WASHINGTON POST, BRITISH NEWSMAN HENRY FAIRLIE HAD SOME HARSH WORDS FOR HIS AMERICAN COLLEAGUES, SAYING IN EFFECT THAT THE CANDIDATES HAVE DONE A FAR BETTER JOB THAN THEIR JOURNALISTIC CRITICS IN PRESENTING THE ISSUES.

BOTH FAIRLIE AND THE WIDELY-READ, SYNDICATED COLUMNIST JACK ANDERSON AGREE ON ONE THING -- THAT GERALD FORD AND JIMMY CARTER PROVIDE THE VOTERS WITH A VERY DISTINCTIVE CHOICE. THE TWO MEN DRAMATICALLY DIFFER IN PERSONALITY, BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. REPUBLICAN FORD IS THE BETTER KNOWN QUANTITY WHO OFFERS CONTINUITY, WHILE DEMOCRAT CARTER PROMISES CHANGE. AND AFTER MONTHS OF INTENSE CAMPAIGNING, INCLUDING THREE TELEVISED DEBATES, THE NATURE OF THE CHOICE IS PROBABLY CLEAR TO MOST AMERICANS, EVEN IF THE PRESS STILL THINKS OTHERWISE.

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